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**BAUCUS, MILITARY MEMBERS' ORGANIZATIONS URGE  
SENATE VOTE TO REVERSE CUTS TO DOCTORS  
CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES, SENIORS**

*Vote this afternoon determines pay for Medicare and TRICARE providers,  
access to health care for seniors and soldiers*

**Washington, DC** – At a press conference this morning, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and representatives of American military members' organizations urged Senators to vote today in support of H.R. 6331, the House-passed Medicare bill, to reverse cuts that threaten military families' and seniors' access to the health care they need. Reimbursement rates for providers caring for military retirees, active duty men and women, and their families through TRICARE are set by the Secretary of Defense in accordance with the rules used by the Medicare program. Accordingly, the recent 10.6 percent cut in Medicare payment rates under the Sustainable Growth Rate formula – caused by the Senate's failure to pass H.R. 6331 before the July 4th recess – means a cut in TRICARE rates that will make more physicians unwilling or unable to accept TRICARE patients. Sixty votes are needed to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to the Medicare bill and pass it. Fifty-nine Senators voted for the bill last month.

**"As Congress has dilly-dallied on Medicare, many providers have stopped accepting new Medicare and TRICARE patients. My home state of Montana has 32,000 TRICARE beneficiaries. I don't want to see them turned away from the doctor's door for lack of one vote in the United States Senate. That's not acceptable to me, and it shouldn't be acceptable to any Senator,"** said Baucus. **"We can't let our military folks down, any more than we can let seniors down. Senators must do what's right today, and support the House-passed Medicare bill."**

Baucus was joined at today's event by Sergeant Major (Ret.) Frank Yoakum of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, which represents more than 414,000 enlisted National Guard men and women, their families, and retirees who depend on TRICARE for their health needs, and Chief Master Sergeant (Ret.) Jon Hake of the Air Force Sergeants Association, which represents 130,000 Air Force Active Duty, Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve Command, retired, veteran and family members. Although the Pentagon has announced that they will delay the implementation of cuts to TRICARE reimbursement rates for now, it is unclear how long the delay will be in place. An estimated 8.9 million uniformed service members and their families could face the prospect of reduced access to medical services.

**"Guard members are preparing for mobilization and deployment with duty in combat zones using TRICARE doctors and dentists. Without these providers, combat readiness suffers,"** said Sergeant Major Yoakum. **"Guard family members are maintaining their physical, mental, and dental health while their citizen soldiers are deployed at war using TRICARE doctors and dentists. Without these providers, family care suffers. Putting off the issue for another 30 days delays the decision to do the right thing."**

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Chief Hake added, “Air Force Sergeants Association is grateful for the efforts to reverse the Medicare cuts. It is right for America and the time to act is now, because Airmen – and that includes soldiers, sailors and Marines and their families – depend on TRICARE, the civilian care component of the Military Health System. When military docs, medics and support personnel deploy, it impacts access to military treatment facilities and clinics. The fact of the matter is, service members and their families rely on TRICARE now more than ever in the past.”

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